December 19, 1991 Press Conference of President George Bush

With Washington-based Foreign Correspondents

THE PRESIDENT: Good question. And you're right, it does affect the ASEAN area. Our visit -- I wish I could go to all these ASEAN countries. I couldn't. I've been to most. But in this case I can tell you that the visit will be on a wide array of subjects. We are not neglecting -- and this is a point I will make to our friends in Singapore and hopefully to the rest of Asia -- we're not neglecting our security responsibilities. I think there's been some concern about what position the United States will be in when we come out of the Philippines.

And I would use this trip reassure the Singaporian leaders as well as those around that we are not going to pull back. I also think -- and this is a broad subject, but I think it is one that should resonate at home -- we are not neglecting the Pacific. As we have coped, and I hope with some degree of world leadership, with the Middle East, with the changes in the republics, with the unification of Germany, with the evolution in Eastern Europe, I thi there has been some feeling in Asia -- and you all are the experts o it -- that perhaps we are neglecting. And so one of the things abou this trip is that we are not -- we don't intend to, nor will we, neglect our role as one whose largest -- as one who's blessed by having the largest trading partners being the Pacific Rim.

And so it's partially that. We will have discussions, we always do, of all these other questions that you raise.

Q What will be your course of action, sir, toward Indonesia now that through the witness of two American journalists i has become apparent that there are problems with the human rights in East Timor? And what would be your advice, sir, to the government o Portugal as the administrating power and the future chairman of the EC to actually rectify the situation in East Timor, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, a lot of discussion is going on, on the tragedy in East Timor. We have expressed ourself in terms of the pure human rights part of it. And I don't know that on this tri we will be directly involved in any way in that particular question. We pride ourselves, and I think properly so, on standing up for huma rights, and I think we've made clear to the parties that are interested there the U.S. position. I don't know how it will come out, frankly, at forthcoming meetings. I just can't help you on that.

Q Mr. President, today the Swedish government recognized Russia, Byelorussia and Ukraine. When will the U.S. do the same?